

# Workforce Observations

## For The North Central WDA

### January, 2002



### ***December Holds No Surprises For The Employment Picture***

The month of December is noted for many things—snow and cold weather, the Christmas holidays and some time off from work for family gatherings. There seems to be an atmosphere of expectation and pause from routine affairs, however brief, which may be an expression of the colder temperatures and heavier clothing. However, some things have surely slowed down by this time, and it is not all because of snowy roads and storms. What happened in the job market of the Upper Wisconsin River Valley in this mid winter month, and how does it compare to previous periods? What are the signs, if any, of what is to come a quarter or more ahead? And, most importantly, what do developments on the regional and national levels have to do with us in the middle of the state of Wisconsin?

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First, the current (December) employment picture. Rates of unemployment went up in nearly every county in the District. This is no novel development, and one expects to see some job loss in the middle of the year. Seasonal factors, which came into play already in the fall, were bound to be felt in December and for a month or two yet. Slowdowns in the agricultural and construction worlds for example, have led to a falloff in orders for many things essential to these industries. What is interesting in the District (and statewide, as well) is that unemployment rates continue at historical lows. The River Valley rate was 5.0 percent, up from just 4.9 percent in November. This represents a strong employment picture compared to the same period in previous years by any comparison.

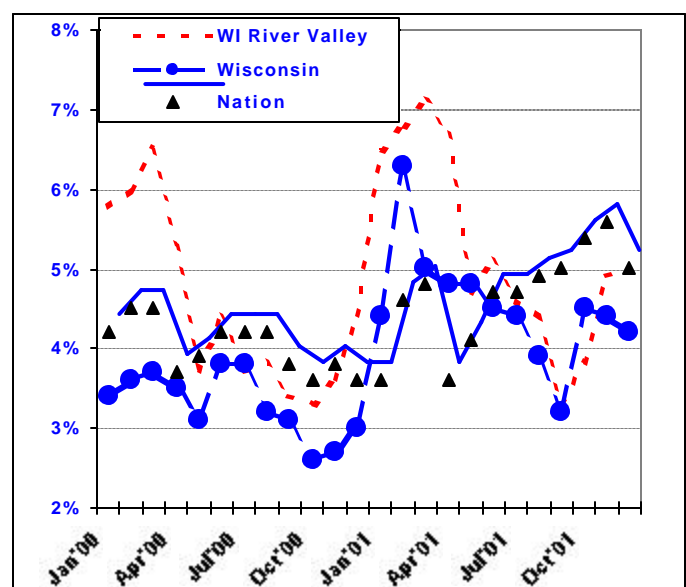
Looking ahead, as we are wont to do in a month where there is more time than usual for reflection and planning, what appears just over the horizon in the job market? It is no secret that recessionary conditions prevail in some areas of the country and that we are in a period of contraction at this time. This has effected our area to some degree, but exactly how much is impossible to say. One problem historically is that serious economic changes, either good or bad, tend to visit us as much as two quarters after their national appearance. So, what we read on the evening news and what we see closer to home are usually different things.

But we do not exist in isolation from the wider realities of the boom and bust, up and down movement that is inevitable in the national and world economies. If serious economic changes are taking place that spell slowdown and even recession, this will be reflected in the Wisconsin and the River District in due course. And, as mentioned above, due course for us usually means about half a year or less. It is still a bit early to be making any predictions about the summer ahead, but that is just about the time one may expect the impact of any current downturns in the wider economy. This something to ponder around a warming fire on a chilly winter's eve.

### ***Trends In The River Valley Counties -***

In the core counties of Marathon, Portage, and Wood the December job picture was unchanged from both the previous month and the same period of 12 months ago. Total nonfarm employment in the three counties was just over 150,000 workers, with about 109,000 of these jobs being in the service producing area. The important industry of manufacturing declined slightly, with nondurable goods manufacturing losing the most (about 300 jobs from November). The decline in nondurable is due somewhat to food and kindred products losing jobs due to seasonal movement. How much of this decline is due to layoffs in paper is hard to say, but serious tightening in local paper business continues to take place.

Considering the whole 9-county district, manufacturing also presented a confident face in December. Again, there were slight decreases in nondurable manufacturing employment levels, but the overall picture (page 2, please)



Remains strong in the mid winter month. Further to the north, manufacturing plays a somewhat less important role in the economic life of the area.. For example Vilas County the number of people working in this sector totals less than 600, whereas those employed in the industries of trade and service amount to almost 4,000. This is in contrast to the state as a whole, and to some of the other counties of the River District. Generally, manufacturing, trade, and service are about even in their total employment numbers. This balance between these major sectors

of the labor force in one of the main reasons for the economic stability of our state. Serious fluctuations in the greater economic picture certainly have an impact on Wisconsin and on individual counties, but it is modified somewhat by the balance between sectors here. This year, mainly because of poor winter weather (so far) and a failing national economy, the important tourist businesses of the north will employ less people. This means that these predominant trade and service sectors in some areas will suffer.



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*[http://www.wisgov.state.wi.us/build\\_wis.asp](http://www.wisgov.state.wi.us/build_wis.asp)*

For The Month Of December	Adams	Forest	Lang.	Lincoln	Mara.	Oneida	Portage	Vilas	Wood	Region
<b>Labor Force</b>	8,304	4,743	9,374	14,732	76,093	20,216	37,092	11,043	41,078	222,675
Employed	8,059	4,506	8,958	14,203	74,113	19,373	36,144	10,559	39,838	215,753
Unemployed	245	237	416	529	1,980	843	948	484	1,240	6,922
Unemployment rate(%)	3.0	5.0	4.4	3.6	2.6	4.2	2.6	4.4	3.0	3.1%
<b>Total, all industries**</b>	3,945	3,192	7,984	12,302	71,078	17,835	32,733	7,930	46,390	203,389
Construction & Mining	166	78	359	600	3,439	1,138	1,126	998	1,699	9,603
Manufacturing	398	524	1,725	4,173	18,487	2,072	5,761	521	9,790	43,451
Transportation & Util.	180	197	420	445	4,020	710	1,920	251	3,272	11,415
Wholesale Trade	113	41	440	467	5,434	384	1,644	143	1,451	10,117
Retail Trade	911	471	1,920	2,356	12,598	4,907	5,984	1,983	9,321	40,451
FIRE	98	99	265	254	4,929	455	3,652	320	920	10,992
Services	842	496	1,603	1,825	14,022	5,278	7,336	1,696	14,303	47,401
Government	1,237	1,286	1,252	2,182	8,149	2,891	5,310	2,018	5,634	29,959
Change from previous mo.	Adams	Forest	Lang.	Lincoln	Mara.	Oneida	Portage	Vilas	Wood	Region
<b>Civilian Labor Force*</b>	318	169	-148	117	502	-7	159	-101	-487	522
Employed	438	230	106	381	1,141	251	513	41	-104	2,997
Unemployed	-120	-61	-254	-264	-639	-258	-354	-142	-383	-2,475
Unemployment rate(%)	-1.6	-1.5	-2.6	-1.8	-0.9	-1.2	-0.9	-1.2	-0.9	0.0
<b>Total, all industries**</b>	-68	-54	-54	-2	56	-320	-190	-121	-189	-942
Construction & Mining	-8	-77	-77	-3	-100	-196	-100	-50	-120	-731
Manufacturing	3	-5	-5	2	-10	-71	-97	0	-157	-340
Transportation & Util.	-2	2	2	-15	-36	-1	-9	-2	-21	-82
Wholesale Trade	2	-9	-9	2	38	2	12	1	8	47
Retail Trade	13	42	42	29	-57	-39	-7	-21	102	104
FIRE	-2	2	2	3	18	-3	-8	2	5	19
Services	-55	1	1	-11	75	19	-3	-23	37	41
Government	-19	-10	-10	-9	128	-31	22	-28	-43	0
Change from year ago	Adams	Forest	Lang.	Lincoln	Mara.	Oneida	Portage	Vilas	Wood	Region
<b>Civilian Labor Force*</b>	140	20	-51	-16	430	151	125	38	-223	614
Employed	191	66	74	73	701	279	375	152	166	2,077
Unemployed	-51	-46	-125	-89	-271	-128	-250	-114	-389	-1,463
Unemployment rate(%)	-0.6	-1.0	-1.3	-0.6	-0.4	-0.6	-0.6	-1.0	-0.9	0.0
<b>Total, all industries**</b>	36	63	-112	-355	190	77	-191	215	-160	-239
Construction & Mining	3	7	-42	6	182	54	-12	78	20	295
Manufacturing	-38	3	-99	-251	-781	-46	-250	19	-282	-1,724
Transportation & Util.	6	-7	-5	-13	81	-12	80	21	-43	108
Wholesale Trade	17	1	-43	34	167	-21	-11	0	-34	110
Retail Trade	63	4	18	-35	-190	191	-294	42	-368	-569
FIRE	3	3	19	-55	50	-18	-15	10	-9	-12
Services	-73	29	48	-33	398	-191	370	48	448	1,044
Government	55	22	-8	-9	283	119	-58	-3	108	510

\* Includes participants residing in area. \*\* Includes employment with employers located in area. Estimates are NOT seasonally adjusted. Current month estimates are preliminary. Totals may not add due to rounding. Calculations based on unrounded numbers.

Look for the most current Labor Market Information at: [WWW.DWD.STATE.WI.US/LMI](http://WWW.DWD.STATE.WI.US/LMI)  
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